

NEWS RELEASE

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DeNUCCI URGES MORE USE OF ENFORCEMENT TOOLS TO COLLECT OVERDUE CHILD SUPPORT PAYMENTS

State Auditor Joe DeNucci reported today that the state's Child Support Enforcement (CSE) Division has underutilized a provision allowing it to seek suspension of the driver's licenses of non-custodial parents who are seriously delinquent in their child support obligations.

According to DeNucci's audit, CSE, which is a division of the Department of Revenue, sent warning letters to only 3 percent of the nearly 27,000 parents who were eligible for license suspension during a two-month period that was reviewed. State law authorizes suspension of driver's licenses of parents who are at least 56 days delinquent in their payments or owe more than \$500 in back child support.

"License suspension should only be used as a last resort because it could deprive a parent of the means of getting to work," said DeNucci. "However, there are many cases in which a warning can get the attention of delinquent parents and encourage them to work out a payment schedule. About \$1.5 billion in child support payments is in arrears, so the Child Support Enforcement Division should use all enforcement tools at its disposal."

CSE officials replied that they agree with Auditor DeNucci's recommendations and said they are increasing the number of license suspension warnings by automating the letters in their software system, noting that past due collections reached an all-time monthly high of \$2.5 million in March 2006.

In another finding, DeNucci's audit questioned \$171,679 in rental car and related costs reimbursed to information technology contractors working with the Child Support Enforcement Division. Although CSE's own policies stipulate that taxi cabs and public transit should be considered as less costly means of transportation, there was no indication that a cost analysis study had been done showing that rental cars were a more economical method of travel.

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The agency's policies also call for employees to share vehicles, but there was no documentation available indicating that this was the case.

Furthermore, DeNucci's audit uncovered several instances of state-funded rental cars being used for what appeared to be personal travel. For example, although three contract employees worked at the data center and stayed at a hotel 4.5 miles from the work site, a typical monthly rental car receipt of one of these workers indicated that the employee traveled 2,000 miles. Another employee's monthly receipt showed 1,964 miles traveled. CSE approved reimbursement in both of these cases.

"CSE should review and analyze its rental car practices to ensure that this is an economically sound method of travel and also not allow contract employees to use vehicles for personal purposes," recommended DeNucci.